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Secretary Gassman Announces Industry Partnership Grant to Help Northwest Region Meet Health Care Sector Needs

During visit to Superior, State Labor Secretary highlights Governor Doyle's agenda to put Wisconsin back to work

SUPERIOR – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$25,000 Wisconsin Industry Partnership grant to help the healthcare sector in northwest Wisconsin meet the growing demand for skilled workers in health-related occupations.

"With this grant, the health care sector in northwest Wisconsin can develop a strategy to provide people with training and opportunities to pursue jobs in health care occupations that are in demand throughout the region," Secretary Gassman said. "These are the kinds of investments that, under Governor Doyle's leadership, will create job opportunities and advance Wisconsin's economy."

Registered nurses, dental hygienists, radiology technicians and surgical technicians are among occupations in demand throughout the Northland Works region, which consists of 17 counties in northwest Wisconsin and neighboring Minnesota. A variety of other occupations are covered under the convening grant, ranging from pharmacy technicians to medical records professionals.

Registered nurses and dental hygienists are jobs that offer the highest pay with two years of training, averaging \$31 an hour or over \$64,000 a year. The addition of over 11,200 new jobs is projected for the region's health care sector by 2018.

The convening grant will allow Northland Works to develop a comprehensive proposal to seek an Industry Partnership training grant centered on health care occupations. In February, Governor Doyle awarded a \$386,728 Industry Partnership grant to Northland Works centered on training in the area of advanced manufacturing.

The Wisconsin Industry Partnership program, administered by DWD, represents a collaborative approach to training involving labor unions, area employers, economic development agencies, workforce development agencies, K-12 schools, technical colleges and University of Wisconsin institutions.

In announcing the health care sector convening grant at the Job Center in Superior, Secretary Gassman was joined by individuals who are being served through DWD and partnering organizations. Among the individuals are recipients of Opportunity Grants, which provide up to \$1,000 per year for technical college training and assistance toward jobs in high-growth areas, such as health care. The Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board currently has 80 Opportunity Grant recipients.

Secretary Gassman also was joined at the event by dislocated workers who recently completed welding boot camp training at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, supported through federal Workforce Investment Act funds administered by DWD.

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In March 2009, Governor Doyle announced a \$5.9 million worker training package that included nearly \$3 million for the Industry Partnership grants and \$1.5 million for Opportunity Grants.

Applicants for the Opportunity Grant program must be at least 18 years of age and employed, but with earnings below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and otherwise ineligible for financial aid. The annual household income limit would be \$29,140 for a family of two, \$36,620 for a family of three, and \$44,100 for a family of four. Applicants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent. Up to \$1,000 will be provided for tuition, fees, books and supplies. Eligible areas of study are those identified by the regional boards as high demand occupations, such as health care, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and energy.

The grants will cover short-term training, enabling individuals to earn certificates or degrees. The grant program also includes registered apprenticeships in high-demand occupations. In addition to the grants, individuals can receive up to \$250 to cover the cost of tools and uniforms, exam fees, transportation and child care. Individuals should apply for grants through their regional workforce development boards or local Job Centers. For Job Center locations, go to JobCenterOfWisconsin.com, or call, 888-258-9966. Contact information for the boards can be found at http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwdwia/PDF/wda_list.pdf.